

Just an Old Fashioned Love Song

Song of Solomon

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Bible Text: Song of Solomon 1
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Today we are starting a series that we are going to preach throughout the summer on what is called the wisdom literature of the Bible. Now let me explain it to you a little bit about the Old Testament and how it is written so you will understand what that is. The Old Testament is broken up into four parts. The first is the biggest part is the histories. And the history goes from the history of the creation of the world to the bondage, the taking into slavery of Israel going into Babylon and the captivity there. And that is the story of not only of God's creation, but predominantly of his relationship with his special people and developing his nation and that is the large part of the Old Testament, the largest part.

Within the histories there is a small section. It is part of Exodus and Deuteronomy and Leviticus which is called the law and it is exactly what it sounds like. It is the law book. This is how God wants you to live and it is how God wants you to worship when you haven't lived the way he wanted you to live.

The third large part of the Old Testament is called the prophets. When we hear prophets we think somebody telling us something that is going to happen far off in the future and that is not what kind of prophets they were. They did do a little bit of that, but more often what they basically were, were they were preachers. They were speaking on God's behalf. And so in some ways if you like biographies of preachers—and I realize I am probably the only one in the room who likes biographies of preachers—then the books would better be entitled things like, "The Life and Labors of the Prophet Isaiah." That is a little bit of his history, but primarily these are his sermons. This is what he preached. This is when he preached it. This is what people did when he preached these messages.

That is the final big section of the Old Testament.

Now in between these two big sections, the histories and the prophets, there is this little section and you can call that kind of the worship book. And it is what is called the wisdom literature. The wisdom literature is four or five books and the biggest one, of course, is the Psalms. The Psalms were the hymnbook the people sang when they went to worship. They sang these psalms.

And then you have the Proverbs which is right next to the Psalms. And that was their Sunday school curriculum. It really was. This is how they taught their children.

So you have your hymnbook and you have your Sunday school curriculum right there together, convenient. On both edges of the wisdom literature we have Job and Ecclesiastes. And basically that is your adult Sunday school. That is the older gentlemen pulling us off to the side and going. "Ok, I realize that you have done your Sunday school lessons. I am glad you understand what life is supposed to be like, but let me tell you something. It doesn't always work out that way."

Sometimes you can do everything right as in the case of Job and everything still go wrong. And even in those situations when your worst fears are realized, I want you to know that you can trust the Lord.

Ecclesiastes is the final book in the wisdom literature. And that is another older man who had everything as King Solomon late in his life saying, "Let me just tell you. I know the Proverbs tells you that if you work hard you will be prosperous. And I want you to know that money is not where it is at. And I know the Proverbs tells you that if you protect your marriage and you are pure in your marriage that you will have great joy in the wife of your youth, but I want you to know that the love of women is not where it is at." And he tells us that work is not where we will find our identity and ultimately he tells us to remember our creator in the days of our youth.

It is two old men just kind of sitting down with you and putting his arm around you and saying, "Let me tell you what life is like."

And, you know, that fits, right? That is wisdom literature. That is what we think of when we think of wisdom. We think of older people kind of walking alongside younger ones and explaining life to us.

And then in the middle of the wisdom literature there is this odd book, Song of Solomon. And I mean it is fun. It is kind of cute. It is... basically the best way to think about it is it is a Broadway play. It really is. That is the best way to think of Song of Solomon is to think of a Broadway type play. You have two main characters. They are singing to each other. You have other characters in the play come out and sing back and forth to the couple sometimes. It is the easiest way.... now we are not going to act it out that way because we would be terrible at it and we are not good at putting on Broadway plays, but that is essentially what is going on. And it is why you have, it will say, the young man. He sings his part and the young bride sings back to him and then you will have the chorus which are typically the daughters of Jerusalem, but sometimes it is other people and they are singing back and just think of it as kind of the big number, right, the big *Guys and Dolls*, *West Side Story*, *Les Miserables*, whichever your favorite is. Think of it as a big number and it will kind of start to make sense to you in your mind.

And it really is a song. We are told that it was King Solomon's greatest song. He wrote hundreds of songs. He wrote thousands of proverbs and this was his greatest.

Great. It is a great song. And it is not written in chronological order. It is kind of just it is a song of two people recounting their love story. It is not a manual for dating. Some people want to look at it and go, "This is how you are supposed to date." You know, she says to her lover, "You are like myrrh, like the smell of my lover is like the smell of myrrh," and some teachers would say, "See, this means you need to wear cologne." And I just don't think that is it.

And I'll be honest with you. I just don't think it is a manual for how to date. I am 99.9 percent sure it is not.

But the question, again, keep sticking with me. Well, then what is it? What is it?

And, ok, it is a love song. Great. We all love love songs. I put together a play list for this series. You know, I started out with Paul McCartney singing, "Some people want to rid the world of silly love songs." But they have... but I look around and I see it isn't so. You know, we all love love songs and there is never enough and that is great. Ok, great. So God loves a love song. So this is an old fashioned love song, but why is it in the Bible? Why is it in the Bible?

And I was about to just kind of ignore the question and move on to teaching it anyway because I really wanted to teach it because I never have. And my wife and I were watching *Colombo* this week and if you have ever watched *Colombo* then it is great. I think it is the best, you know, detective show ever. And the great thing about Colombo is he would seize on one just kind of odd thing that didn't fit. He would seize on one odd detail that didn't fit and he would hound that one detail until everything else made sense. And that drove me back to this book and I realized I have got to figure out why it doesn't fit. If I can figure out how it fits then it is going to make sense to me.

Colombo taught me exegesis this week. And so I started going back and I went, "Ok, well, what else in the Old Testament doesn't fit?"

There are other books that don't fit. Ruth. It is a cute story. It is a great story. Hear me. I am a lover of the book of Ruth, ok? But it is a story of one woman born in Moab. She didn't even belong in Israel and she was found and she was brought into Israel and she ultimately, well, she was poor. She was so poor she had to go out and gather her own grain and she was noticed by this big man, this great man in the community and she was brought into the royal family and she was ultimately one of the ancestors of King David and Jesus. And that is a great story. Why is it in the Bible?

I mean there were literally dozens of people who were ancestors of Jesus and none of the other ones got their own book. So why her? I mean, I am sure they all had great stories.

There is another odd story in the Old Testament, it is the book of Esther. It is, what some people would tell you, the weirdest book in the entire Old Testament, because it has not got a single reference to the Messiah. People will tell you it is the only Old Testament book without a single messianic reference. Clearly I don't believe that because I think the entire Old Testament is about Jesus, but it is the hardest one to kind of force into the mold. I will say that.

And, again, it is a story of a peasant commoner girl who is kind of forced into this beauty pageant. It is not really a beauty pageant, but we are not going there today. She is forced to spend the night with the emperor and she is made into the queen. And as queen she saves the entire nation of Israel.

But why is it in the Bible? That is a neat story. I mean it definitely should have gotten a chapter out of, you know, Samuel. But why is it in the Bible? A whole book? And then you come to the Song of Songs, the Song of Solomon and here you have a peasant girl who is probably from a single home, a single parent home. She is forced to work. Her brothers are unkind to her. She is forced to go out and work and keep her family's vineyard and in so doing she hasn't been able to take care of her body the way she wants to. In that culture it was a real sign of honor to be as light skinned as possible. It meant if you were light skinned it meant you didn't have to work. You didn't have to go out in the sun. And she was tan and she was ashamed of her tan, very different from our culture. We are not going there either.

And but that point just kind of stands out that she was common. She was poor. And King Solomon, the greatest king of them all in Israel's history notices her and falls madly, passionately in love with her and brings her into his chambers and writes this beautiful song about how beautiful she is and how wonderful she is and how much he loves her.

And all of the sudden, finally, literally, at 4:15 in the morning on Thursday it hit me. It is a princess story. Ruth is a princess story, a commoner brought into the royal family. Esther is a princess story, a commoner brought into the royal family. Song of Solomon is a princess story, a commoner brought into the royal family. God loves princess stories. And I am a father of four boys. We don't do a lot of princess stories. But there is something about a princess story that resonates with all of us. There is something about them we love. This idea that there could be someone that would love us so much, the idea that someone could fall in love with us even though we have nothing to offer them. A king could look upon us and love us so much that he would be willing to humiliate himself and come down to our level and sweep us up into his castle even though we have nothing to offer, even though there will be nothing that we would do to increase his kingdom. He would not get any great treaties or any great trade agreements through our marriage. He would love us just for us. He would love us so much that he would leave everything for us. It is a story that resonates deep in our heart. We want to be loved like that because at the core of our being we know that is the only kind of love we will ever be able to keep because if you love me for something about me, ultimately I will fail. If you

love me for my sense of humor, what happens when I am not funny anymore? If you love me for my devastating good looks, when happens to me when I get old?

Come on, laugh people, laugh. Heavens. All the college students are starting to leave, aren't you? You usually all laugh anyway. Come on.

We love a prince's story that resonates deep in our heart because we want to be loved like that. And God loves to tell princess stories, because he loves his people like that. That is exactly how he loves us. He wants us to know that he loves us the way no human ever could. In this story, the Song of Solomon is an illustration of how Jesus, how the Son of God feels about this Church.

I want you to know that. It is an illustration of the most important story of all, the story of how God himself created a bride for his Son. That is the story of the Bible. You need to understand that, that the story of the Bible is that God wanted to create something for his Son and we get a hint of it like this. If you will remember, those of you who remember creation, the creation story, God creates the world and he fills it with animals and he says, "Ok. But there is nothing there like us. Let's create something in our own image."

So after his own image God created male and female, in his own image he created them.

And then in the next chapter God brings Adam out and he says, "Adam, I want you to meet the animals. I want you to name the animals. I want you to take dominion over them and I want you to find a helper who is suitable for you."

And Adam named all the animals, but he didn't anybody who was what? Like him. And so God created a bride like him. He took the rib out of Adam and made Eve in Adam's image, after his likeness, to be like him, just like he created us to be like God. It is an important parallel that most of us don't get.

Why did God create us? To be the bride for his Son. That is how in history it was done. Historically, through all the ages, guys and girls didn't go out and date and find somebody that they liked. Parents picked spouses for their children and that is how God created the world, it is why he created the world, to have a spouse for his children.

That is why he created us.

Now that is the story that is illustrated for us and the passion of the story that is illustrated for us in the Song of Solomon. Now I am not saying, what I am not saying is the Song of Solomon is an allegory and we are not going to spend the next 10 years going through every verse and let me explain to you what each of these words means and how they are all applied to different things and, you know, kind of some of the silliness went to far with the old allegorical preachers of the past.

I am not saying it is an allegory. It is a true story. I believe that. It is a real love song that Solomon wrote about his wife. I really do believe that, but it is an illustration of something so much higher and so much better.

You see, when the apostle Paul was trying to explain the gospel as clearly as he could to the people at Ephesus what he did not say was this. He did not say, “Remember how your dad loved your mom? That is the way Christ feels about the Church.”

That is the precise opposite of what he said. He said, “Husbands, love your wives the way Christ loved the Church.”

Christ’s love for us is the model. It is the ultimate love story upon which all love stories are written. And, yes, Song of Solomon illustrates how God feels about you. Song of Solomon illustrates how God feels about you. And it is scandalous. He feels so passionate about you. He wants to come after you. He wants to be with you at all times. That is what the song of Solomon illustrates for you, God’s passion for you, his love for you.

It is not a manual on how to get a wife and what to do with her once you get one. It is not. It is a manual, it is a description, it is a beautiful story singing for you how God feels about this church. He is not aloof and far off. He is passionate and he is coming after you like a love struck boy who will let nothing get in his way until he is in the arms of his bride.

It is the story of the Bible. That is the story of history. That is your story.

And I want you to understand that as we dive into the Song of Solomon that it is not just a manual for romantic love for humans, because I don’t know what God is doing in your story. I don’t know what God’s plans for you romantically are. I have no idea.

Some of you will be single your entire life. Some of you will be married and it will be great. Some of you will be married and it will be terrible. Some of you will be married, it will be terrible and you will be married again and it will be great. The options just go on and on.

I don’t know what he is doing for you. But I know this. He loves you and he is coming after you. And the Song of Solomon is for you no matter what your marital status is. And I want you to know that because there is a real danger in our climate of idolizing and making a huge idol out of the perfect Christian family and it doesn’t exist.

What the Bible teaches about love is simple. The Bible teaches that being single is difficult and it is sometimes devastating and that being married is difficult and sometimes devastating. And it is hard to be lonely and it is worse to be in a bad marriage. That is what the Bible teaches about marriage. That is the summary. There it is. You can go now.

And I don't want you to read books like the Song of Solomon and to have your lusts, your covetousness, your idolatry of a Christian marriage fed until you just think you are never going to be complete if you don't have a husband or a wife like this. And I don't want you to read the book of the Song of Solomon and then look at the person you actually did marry and go, "What is wrong with you? Why aren't you like that? Your legs don't look like ivory towers."

I don't want you to do either one of those things. I don't want this book to make you feel heart sick. I don't want this book to make you feel shame and guilt over how you have defiled sex in your past. I want this book to unveil for you how deeply and passionately the Lord of the universe loves you. And I want you to be scandalized by how much he loves you. I want you to know that whatever threatens or to enslave you, he will overwhelm and he will overcome and he will bring you to live with him.

I want you to see so much more in this than a manual for some kind of idolatrous ideal love story. If you get married, you need to know that you are marrying a sinner who will disappoint you. And you need to know that you are a sinner and you will disappoint. You will really, truly, thoroughly disappoint your spouse. There will be real things that you should do that you will fail to do. And there will be bad things that you should not do that you will do. And you, if you are going to read this book to give you an ideal of how I should feel my whole life, don't read it. All it is going to do is make you mad and sick at the world and mad at God for not giving you what he clearly gave Solomon.

But if you will reads it to see how God feels about you, yeah, feels about you, then I want you to love it. I have been reading this book every day. I have read this through this book every day for the last two weeks. And it makes me want to break out into words I don't usually use. I mean, usually you can be around me pretty much all day long and not hear words like rapturous. It just doesn't come from my lips.

And you could have been... this is the only time that I will tell you this. This is the only time in my life as a pastor or as a preacher that I have ever been awakened at four in the morning and written something. And I felt like it was given to me just because of the love that has been shed abroad in my heart from reading this text.

I want you to know... I don't want you to... I want you to understand something. I want you to understand that nobody is ever going to love you like Jesus. And no one is every going to love you like Jesus, that Song of Solomon, what is it? It is a foreshadowing of the perfect marriage, the marriage that will only come when we finally hear the trumpet and we hear the voice call all of us to the marriage supper of the lamb. That is what this is. It is a song about a real person singing about a real bride. I believe that. And as such it has some practical application for us. I believe that. But it is so much more. It is so much more.

But that is a very long introduction to a very short sermon. Please turn with me to the text. It is in your bulletin.

And hear these beautiful words. And if you want to, I am not going to change voices, because I can't do that real well. I toyed with the idea of having Bianca come up and read this back and forth to me, but I thought that would just creep you out. So I am going to read the whole thing. But if you want to, visualize, it really does help me to kind of visualize it. Maybe it is just because I went and saw *Beauty and the Beast* a few weeks ago, but see two people on the state singing this to each other. It actually helps.

Hear the Word of the Lord from Song of Songs chapter one, the voice of the young woman.

I am dark but beautiful,
O women of Jerusalem—
dark as the tents of Kedar,
dark as the curtains of Solomon's tents.
Don't stare at me because I am dark—
the sun has darkened my skin.
My brothers were angry with me;
they forced me to care for their vineyards,
so I couldn't care for myself—my own vineyard.
Tell me, my love, where are you leading your flock today?
Where will you rest your sheep at noon?
For why should I wander like a prostitute
among your friends and their flocks?

If you don't know, O most beautiful woman,
follow the trail of my flock,
and graze your young goats by the shepherds' tents.
You are as exciting, my darling,
as a mare among Pharaoh's stallions.
How lovely are your cheeks;
your earrings set them afire!
How lovely is your neck,
enhanced by a string of jewels.
We will make for you earrings of gold
and beads of silver.

The king is lying on his couch,
enchanted by the fragrance of my perfume.
My lover is like a sachet of myrrh
lying between my breasts.
He is like a bouquet of sweet henna blossoms
from the vineyards of En-gedi.

How beautiful you are, my darling,
how beautiful!
Your eyes are like doves.

You are so handsome, my love,
pleasing beyond words!
The soft grass is our bed;
fragrant cedar branches are the beams of our house,
and pleasant smelling firs are the rafters.

Thus ends the reading of God's Word.

Please pray with me.

Father, we pray that you would open these words to our hearts and open our hearts to your love in Jesus' name. Amen.

Jesus is the ultimate heart sick lover. And I want to ask you a question. As you read the Song of Songs, does it embarrass you to think that God could love you, that Jesus could love you like that. Every line of this poem drips with the honey sweetness of how much Solomon loves this farm maid.

Do you really think that Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, do you think he needs to go to Solomon and learn a thing or two about love? Do you think to yourself, "Oh, if Jesus could just love the way Solomon loved, then he would be even more perfect"?

Or do you think Solomon's love is a mere reflection, a mere shadow of how passionately God feels about his people.

God is love. He is the source of love. He is the creator of love. He is the absolute ultimate of love. And the best human love we can possibly experience is only a faint shadow of the love he feels for us. That is why, that is why the people who spent the most time in history, the people who spent the most time reflecting on the Bible went back again to the Song of Songs and they compared it and they wrote sermons about it about how Jesus loved his people. And we want to laugh at them. There is an arrogance to modern man. There is a lot of arrogance to modern man and we want to laugh at the Puritans and we want to laugh at the doctrines of old and say, "Well, they just thought this was about Christ and the Church because they were embarrassed to talk about sex. They weren't as mature as we are. They just don't get it like we do."

Guys, for the history of humankind men have known how the plumbing works, ok? And the Puritans were not embarrassed to talk about marital love. They weren't. As a matter of fact, if you will go back and actually read about the Puritans you will find out that they used to regularly discipline, bring before the courts of the church, discipline husbands and wives for not giving their spouse what they referred to as their due benevolence.

We don't do that in this church. They understood how it worked and they thought it was important enough to discipline you for not having it with your spouse. They weren't embarrassed by sex. They just weren't obsessed with it. They just didn't think it was the best you could possibly achieve. As a matter of fact, they thought that there was

something much better available to them than the sweet, the honey sweetness, the loving kisses of their heavenly Father, that the saving arms of Jesus Christ were much more precious, much more enjoyable. We are the ones who are embarrassed. We are embarrassed to think that maybe God would feel this way about us, but not them.

When Jonathan Edwards who is arguably the greatest preacher in the history of his country and definitely the greatest theological thinker in the history of this country, when he wrote his, what many consider his best sermon, a sermon that... It was a sermon. I use the term loosely, about 100 pages long. And it was about the character of Jesus and how perfect he is in every possible way. He reached for a title of this beautiful treatise and he reached into the book of Song of Songs and he came away with the name, "You are all together lovely."

That is how they felt about him. That is one of those who spent the most time in prayer and reflection on God and his grace to land in this book because they are overwhelmed by how much God loves them. And I want you to understand that Jesus loves you that way. He doesn't stand far off. He is not aloof with his arms folded. He is not putting his walls out in front of you like hoops that you have to jump through to get to him. He is love struck by you. He has done everything he can possibly do to be with you. He has given himself to be with you.

We see in this text a lover so enamored that he wants all of his senses filled with his love. He wants to stare at his bride. He wants to touch her. He wants to smell her. He wants to hear her voice. He wants to taste her. He cannot possibly get enough of her. He wants to be with her early in the morning. He wants her to follow him to work. She wants to follow him to work. She follows him all day long. In the evening they are together. In the middle of the night they wake up and they find each other. His love for her brings out hyperbole that if you read this literally like a manual it makes no sense. She says things to him like, "Oh, why couldn't you have been my brother?"

If you read this too literally you think "Ooh."

But if you have ever been in love and you know that feeling, what she is saying, "Why was there ever a day when I didn't know you? Why was I not there when you were given birth? I can't get enough of you."

And that is the way Jesus feels about us.

If you study the Old Testament then it really study it like beyond what I have done, people who have really gotten into Hebrew and really gotten in the Old Testament have told me that the first thing you have to get over is that there is this embarrassing language. There is this embarrassing language that the God uses for his love toward us, his covenant language. It is almost graphic.

And, for instance, the word “know,” the word translated “to know” in our Bible. What does it say? It says things like, “Adam knew Eve and she conceived and brought forth a son.”

“Abraham knew Sarah and she conceived and brought forth a son.”

“David knew Bathsheba and she conceived and brought forth a son.”

And then what does David write, “Oh, God, you have searched me and you know me. You know my inward parts. You know me from the earliest in the mornings. You are with me at late at night. I can’t get away from you.”

And we go, “Well, that is talking about the theological attribute of omniscience and how you can’t teach Jesus anything. And that is why David writes, ‘Such knowledge is so wonderful I cannot imagine it.’”

Really? Omniscience is so wonderful that you can’t attain it? It is precious and it is dear and it pulls out from him this response.

“Lord, know me. Search me. Is there anything about me that grieves you? Show me what it is.”

Because God would love him that passionately and that intimately.

Why do I labor this? Because I want you to be shocked. I want you to be scandalized by how much Jesus loves you. I want you to see what the illustration is of how he loves you and I want you to see that Jesus... the place that Jesus brings you.

This is really the thing that kind of opened the door and allowed me to run through the field of this explanation. It was when I finally realized how often the word “garden” comes up. It is fascinating.

She describes herself as a garden. I am a vineyard. She describes her husband as a garden. He is a tree with fruit. They want to be together in the garden on the carpets of green.

Were you able to read the allusions there? On the carpets of green underneath the fir cedars. Where do they want to be? Together outside in the garden under the trees.

He describes her as a garden. She describes her wedding night by saying, “Awake, oh wind, and come blow on my garden.”

When the daughters of Jerusalem asked, “Where is your lover?” she says, “My lover has gone into his garden. He is mine. I am a garden enclosed.”

Now, if you know your Bible, and if you don't you are in good company in this room, ok? Because we are just a biblically ignorant culture so don't like take offense.

If you don't, but if you know the Bible, you know that there are certain themes that run all the way through it. One of the things that amazes us about the Bible, the reason why I believe the Bible is God's Word is because even though it was written by dozens of different authors over a span of a millennia, they have these same themes that keep coming through it. And one of those themes is this theme of a garden, that when God create the bride for his Son, he put Adam and Eve in a garden. And he told them that he would fellowship with them in the garden as long as they lived by faith.

And to them what that meant was don't eat from this tree.

Now the tree of good and evil wasn't a magic fruit. It didn't, you know, cause mist to go when all over the place and change the world. But it was a tree that they lived with by faith.

Well, why was it bad? Because God said don't eat it. Trust me.

Why shouldn't I eat it?

Because I said not to. And I need you to live by faith.

And they stopped living by faith and they said, "Well, we want to see for ourselves."

And what do you know? God is a liar. This fruit tastes good.

And he said, "Well, that is not what I meant."

Disobedience is bad. And they became rebellious and independent and sinners. And sin an act of grace God shut them out of the garden because the tree of life was there and he didn't want them to live forever independent, rebellious sinners. He shut them out of the garden.

And this idea of a garden stays with us throughout the Bible. How was the land of Canaan described to the slaves in Israel? It is a land flowing with milk and honey. It is a garden.

And at the end of time we are told when we come to this wedding supper of the lamb we are told that the bride comes and meets her husband and they dwell together in this new city that comes out of heaven. And we think city, sky scrapers, buildings.

But how is the city described? With a river going down the middle of it just like there was in the original garden and on both sides of the river was the tree of life. It is a garden. It is a huge garden. It is a city now. It has people in it, but it is a garden.

Jesus will finally have his bride in his garden.

But if you know your Bible you know that there was a garden that came between the Garden of Eden and the new heavens and the new earth.

I want you to believe this. The purpose of history is that God created us to be a bride for his Son. And we know that from John chapter 17. In John chapter 17 Jesus says, "Father, the hour has come. I am ready to bring them into the garden."

And so he starts praying, "Father, let them all be one."

And we always talk about that as kind of the sermon text for Church unity, right? It is. We should be. We... let us be one ever as we, Father and Son are one. Let them be one as we are one so that we can be joined together, us and them and they in me. Let us become together as one flesh. Let us be one.

And he prays that he would be joined together with them. And then when he ends the prayer John tells us he went out into the garden. And in that garden Matthew, Mark and Luke tells us Jesus fell on his face and God began revealing to him if you want to be one with your bride, if you want to be one flesh with her, then this is what has got to happen. You have to become sin because she chose sin. You have to pay for sin. And I am going to pour my wrath out on you. She turned her back on me so I am going to turn my back on you.

And Jesus poured out his soul to the Father and he said, "No."

In the garden he prayed drops of blood. "No, I don't want to do that."

And in the garden he said, "Not my will, but yours be done."

And in the garden the soldiers came to arrest him. And in the garden the soldiers failed to arrest him because they asked, "Who are you? Are you the Jesus the Messiah? Are you Jesus?"

And he said, "I am."

And just the power of that phrase pushed them back. And in the garden he allowed himself to be arrested and betrayed and ultimately killed so that he could be in the garden with his bride.

That is where we are brought. That is what Jesus did for us. Do you really think this book is just about how a man loves his life? It is about so much more. It is about passion. It is about how Jesus loves you and wants to give himself for you.

And, you see, if you understand the Bible this way then you understand that it is nothing

more than just another romantic comedy and it ends with a wedding like all good movies do. And in between the beginning and the wedding there is a tragedy that separates the couple and in... then after the tragedy, almost always the husband has to do something that is absolutely humiliating to get his wife back. If it is Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* he has to go stand up for his enemy to save his wife's... his love's good name. If it is John Cusack in *Say Anything* he has to hold the jam box above his head, humiliating himself in front of the whole neighborhood listening to Peter Gabriel sing out in your eyes. I am sorry, I haven't seen a romantic comedy in a few years so I don't have anything. I am sure the theme still is [?]

And Jesus had to absolutely humiliate himself and be stripped and to be beaten and to be killed and have God the Father turn his back on him so he could be with you.

And there is always a moment in every one of those movies where the girl has to look upon this act of utter humiliation and it either melts her heart and she runs away with him or, like Jenny in *Forrest Gump*, she just laughs and scorns him and walks away.

And the question for you is: Will you believe? What will you do with this cross? Will you receive it? Why did Jenny reject Forrest? Because she was dirty and she didn't think anybody could love her like that.

Do you think that you can't be loved in this way? You can. Jesus knows you. He knows what he is getting. Will you let this melt your heart? Will you receive it or will you just harden your heart and walk away?

This is a book about a lover who wants to be with his bride. It is not an evangelistic book. It is a worship book. It is what we do whenever we come in this room. And some of you, though you have been a Christian for years, maybe decades, you have been scorning your husband when he wants to be with you. Will you come and let him love you?

Please pray with me.